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Written statement* submitted by Conseil International pour le soutien à des procès équitables et aux Droits de l'Homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[07 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Institutionalised Discrimination against Shiite Citizens in Bahrain

The government of Bahrain has enhanced its discrimination against Shiite citizens especially since 2011. The persecution against Shiite Bahrainis is especially clear in education, medical professions, and against former MPs, among many others.

Discrimination in Education
In Bahrain, since 2011, the Ministry of Education has increased the level of discrimination in curriculum, employment and promotions, and distribution of scholarships, targeting Shia citizens, especially, by way of reprisal for their participation in public protests calling for reforms.

There were **no recommendations** made by countries in this specific part that would cover discrimination in education.

- **Physical Assaults and Repression:** In 2011, around 9,000 teachers and educators participated in public protests, demanding a peaceful and democratic transition. The Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) initiated a three-day strike, calling for improvements of the education system. As a result, a number of them were arrested, abused, and tortured. The president of the BTA, Mahdi Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb, and the vice president immediately lost their jobs and sentenced to prison, being charged with 'inciting hatred of the authority' and 'attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force'. Mahdi Abu Deeb has since fully completed his sentence, while all attempts to appeal his sentencing during his imprisonment was quashed.
- **Marginalisation from High-Ranking Positions**: The senior positions in the Ministry of Education have been occupied by pro-authority personnel, while Shia teachers, who constitute the majority of population, or anyone that has mentioned opinions contrary to the Bahrain Government, have been marginalised from high-ranking positions in decision-making, supervision and mentoring other teachers.
- **Partial and Biased Curriculum:** The government of Bahrain has deliberately imposed a biased curriculum of religion and belief on public and private schools, ignoring various religious denominations in the country. Shia specialist teachers have been marginalised from the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Directorate. All students have been forced to learn the principles of Sunni doctrine in the official curriculum, and no other sects or beliefs are permitted to be taught on the official curriculum. This indicates the government's lack of commitment to neutrality in this matter, in addition to their practice of discrimination and failure to treat a group that represents the majority of the population on the basis of equal citizenship.
- **Discrimination in Employment:** It was reported in 2016 that 1,573 Bahraini teachers, all of whom are Shia, were unemployed, while the Ministry of Education newly hired 3,110 volunteers, despite strong claims regarding their lack of educational qualifications. Meanwhile, foreign teachers have readily been employed, representing 20 percent of the total number of employees in the educational sector. Furthermore, a number of Shia employees in education have been arbitrarily transferred to lower positions or positions that do not come within their area of expertise, or assigned tasks that do not match their job title.
- **Discrimination in Scholarships:** Scholarships represent one of the manifestations of blatant discrimination and sectarian oppression in Bahrain. Shia students have been deprived of their rights amid a sharp increase in discrimination in the distribution of scholarships. In 2015 alone, 34 percent of the top-grade students were deprived of scholarships, which has caused observers to rightly accuse the authorities of distributing educational support based on students' political or sectarian affiliation.

Discrimination in Medical Professions
Medical services have been severely interfered by the authorities since 2011. Medical facilities have been prevented from offering all their services, and relevant personnel have been targeted for humiliation, physical and psychological abuse, and incarceration. In particular, Salmaniya Medical Complex, the only-full service public hospital in Bahrain, has been a centre of discrimination and repression against health professionals. Security forces occupied and controlled the complex to hinder them from providing medical treatment to the injured in retaliation for their participation in anti-government demonstrations.

- **Physical Attacks and Violation**

Doctors and nurses were subjected to verbal, psychological and physical abuse at the complex, and medics who attempted to approach injured protesters at the Pearl Roundabout were harshly beaten by security forces. A number of them were arrested and tortured only because they provided their medical services to citizens injured by gas inhalation, muscular skeletal injury, and shotgun wounds due to the harsh crackdown by security forces.

- **Subjective and Arbitrary Verdict**
  In 2011, 20 medics were put on military trial, and sentenced between 5 and 15 years, under charges of felony and misdemeanours.

  For instance, Dr. Ali Al-Ekri, a renowned surgeon was sentenced to 15 years, later reduced to 5 years after appeal, being accused of felony. He had been working at the Salmaniya Medical Complex for more than 20 years, and well-known for his humanitarian volunteering work. During the protests in February 2011, he offered emergency treatment at the medical tent and helped in evacuating women and children, which caused his arrested in the following month. He has repeatedly claimed that he was tortured by members of the security apparatus, and that he lost consciousness many times as a result of this.

Persecution of Former MPs
In 2011, Members of Parliament (MPs) from the opposition bloc resigned in protest over violent crackdowns of the authorities against public demonstrators calling for comprehensive political reform. Since then, the Bahraini authorities have targeted former MPs for exercising their parliamentary right of supervision and accountability.

- **Criminalisation of Freedom of Expression**
  Although the vast majority of former MPs have moderate and peaceful views in regards to political reform, their justifiable demands for transparency, rule of law, and the empowerment of parliament have been branded by authorities as 'extremist and radical' propaganda.

  As a result, a number of former MPs have been targeted and punished for their political views, many of whom come from different backgrounds and sections of society. Khalil Marzooq, MatarMatar, Osama Al-Tamimi, Hasan Sultan, Hasan Isa, Jawad Fairooz, Jalal Fairooz, Khalid Abdilaal, Sayed Jamil Kadhem, Majeed Al-Sabi', and Sheikh Ali Salman have been targeted by the government due to their critical stance against the government. **Subjective and Biased Verdicts**

  The courts have exhibited a clear bias towards politically-motivated verdicts, relying on false testimonies, issuing massive sentences, and giving green-lights for death sentences despite international condemnation. Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary General of Al-Wefaq, the most influential and largest political group in Bahrain, has been sentenced in July 2015 to four years in jail, after being convicted of inciting hatred and calling for forceful authority change. His sentence was bizarrely intensified to nine years after an appeal by his defense counsel.

- **Revocation of Nationality**
  The revocation of nationality has been an instrument for the Bahraini authorities to punish political dissidents. Targeted MPs have not managed to escape such an arbitrary punishment.

  Former MPs Abdul Hadi Khalaf, Jawad Fairooz, Jalal Fairooz together with 29 other individuals, have unilaterally been stripped of his Bahraini nationality in November 2012, being charged of 'damaging state security. Despite their moderate political view, they have been forced into exile, as they do not hold any other citizenship.

  From 2012 to January 2018, a further 551 have been arbitrarily stripped of their nationalities, encompassing MPs, journalists, activists, scholars, and any group or individual that has criticised government actions.

- **Dissolving NGOs and Political Societies**
  Since 2006, the following human rights NGOs, cultural, and political societies been dissolved: Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Islamic Scholars Council, Al Ressalah Cultural Society, Al Tawea Cultural Society, Islamic Action (Political Society), Al Wefaq (Political Society).

  In June 2016 the largest political society, Al-Wefaq has been dissolved and its assets sold. There was a brief and opaque court procedure, which concluded with a severe and highly inflammatory result to close the party, seize and sell its assets, with no proper and fair appeal process to contest the decision – with its Secretary General, Sheikh Ali Salman, undergoing an intensified sentence after appealing to reconsider the judgement against him. Another

prominent party, Wa'ad, has also been targeted, with numerous suspension orders handed to it over the last few years. In March 2017, a case has been lodged to dissolve the party.

Recommendations

- For the Bahraini authorities to stop all violations and discrimination against the rights of teachers, medical professionals, activists, and former MPs and not prejudice their freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly.
- For the Bahraini authorities to guarantee that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as stipulated in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- For the Bahraini authorities to immediately release arrested and/or imprisoned opposition leaders, human rights activists, teachers, medical professionals, activists, former and current MPs, and prisoners of conscience whom being charged for exercising their rights, and stop arbitrary verdicts issued against them.
- For the Bahraini authorities to end the practice of revoking nationality and forced exile as a method of reprisal against political opponents.
- For the international community to ensure united pressure directed at Bahrain through all legal means and urge Bahrain to rescind the arbitrary political measures that hinder freedom of expression and assembly.
- Law enforcement agencies should publicly make commitments to investigate all religious discrimination and persecution in Bahrain.